

For Immediate Release

April 7, 2009

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT

AFTER MEETING WITH GENERAL ODIERNO

Al Faw Palace

Baghdad, Iraq

5:24 P.M. (Local)

Q Sir, can you tell us what your primary purpose is in being here?

THE PRESIDENT: To say thank you to the troops. They are doing extraordinary work. General Odierno has been helping to lead a very effective operation here. We want to be fully briefed. And nothing does that better than face-to-face meetings.

I'll have the opportunity to meet with Prime Minister Maliki and President Talabani while I'm here. Obviously we've spent a lot of time trying to get Afghanistan right. But I think it's important for us to remember that there's still a lot of work to be done here. And in addition to thanking our troops, I also want to send a strong message to our diplomatic corps and our civilians that they're going to be critical to our success here.

We've made significant political progress. You've seen a greater willingness on the part of all the factions in Iraq to resolve their issues politically and through non-violent means. But with the national elections coming up, many of the unresolved issues may be brought to a head. And it's very important for us to use all of our influence to encourage parties to resolve these issues in ways that are equitable and fair. And I think that my presence here can help do that.

Okay. Thank you, guys.



Not to mention, Chip, I thought you guys hadn't been on the road long enough. (Laughter.) I know that you didn't feel like going home, we had under-worked you. So I figured one more stop.

Q Did you say you're meeting with or talking to --

THE PRESIDENT: I will be meeting with them, face to face.

Q Face to face?

Q Will that be here, Mr. President?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. In the near vicinity.

END 5:26 P.M. (Local)